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Traveling Lite with Skip: Pay Attention To The Man Behind The Curtain

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Academic Leadership Journal

[Pay Attention To The Man Behind The Curtain](#)

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Traveling Lite with Skip

Pay Attention To The Man Behind The Curtain

By William "Skip" Boyer

Leading is a tough business, whether it's your civic club or a big company. If you read just about any of the handy self-help books on leadership, you already know this. It's a war out there.

You can confirm this by reading the leadership secrets of Attila the Hun, or the leadership principles of wartime president Abraham Lincoln, or Generals U.S. Grant or Robert E. Lee or the bedside companion for many top leaders, The Art of War.

Being a great leader, apparently, also means running up a high body count. It's a tough business and demands tough thinking.

Actually, I wasn't thinking about any of this the other night. The television was on in the family room and that old classic movie, The Wizard of Oz, was running again for the zillionth time. Of course, I had seen it as a child, and had even read a few of the Oz books. (Most people don't realize there is an entire series of books about the land of Oz. The tale of Dorothy and the Wizard are only a small part of Frank Baum's tales.)

I haven't seen the movie recently, however, so I sat down and watched the tale of the Yellow Brick Road unfold. By the way, it's better in color. The last time I saw it was on a black and white television. You miss that entire business with the Horse-Of-A-Different-Color when you watch it in black and white.

We were midway down the Yellow Brick Road when it suddenly dawned on me that I'd met all these characters before at the office! I've worked with and for Wizards, Wicked Witches, Tin Men and Scarecrows and even a Cowardly Lion or two. And so have you, if you think about it.

Pay attention now and let me introduce you to a few observations from the Emerald City School of Management and Practical Wizardry. Or you could call it The Leadership Secrets of the Wizard of Oz.

Healthy skepticism is good. If someone tells you not to pay any attention to the man behind the curtain, pay attention to the man behind the curtain. Whatever is happening back there probably affects you directly.

Munchkins are good. Pay attention to your Munchkin Management. Be nice to the little people on your way up. They'll still be there on your way down. And while you're up there, you do not want the Lollipop Guild on your case.

Wicked Witches are not good. Sooner or later you'll run into your very own Wicked Witch of the North. How you handle said witch will determine whether or not that employee is salvageable. And remember: dropping a house on them is the last resort. It's very hard to come back from having a house dropped on you.

Mentors are good. Find one you trust. They've been down the Yellow Brick Road before. Maybe they'll share their map. You always want Glenda the Good Witch on your side.

Flying monkeys are not good. Sooner or later, somebody will hit you with flying monkeys. Flying monkeys come in all shapes, sizes, colors and configurations. They may look like your competition, your vendors, your employees or even your customers. How you deal with them will determine your future in the Emerald City.

Communicating is good. If the sign says "Don't go into the poppy field because you might die," pay attention. Then figure out a way to avoid the poppy field or plow it under. Listening helps, too.

Common sense is good. Not every wizard you meet really is. Learn to tell the difference. Some are just 50 miles from home and have a

briefcase or a hot air balloon. If the wizard sitting opposite your desk says he can beat flying monkeys, make him prove it.

Vision is good. If you're going to lead, you'd better know where you're going. Or, as we say down in Oz, "Follow the Yellow Brick Road." You may sing it if you like, but if you look back and no one is following you, you're not leading. You're just out walking with a personal sound track.

You can also look at the Yellow Brick Road as part of your learning experience. True leadership is a journey, so let's be off to see the wizard!

Tornadoes are not good. They aren't always bad, though. Either way, they shake up the status quo. One minute, you're back home in Kansas; the next minute, you're on the east edge of Oz. The only thing for sure is that you're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.

Team is good. Choose the members of your team wisely and well. You've got a long road ahead of you. Walk it with those you trust who share your vision. Leave the dog at home.

Character is good. Don't be afraid of words like "heart" and "spirit" and "soul." They speak to your character. Your talent was a gift, your I.Q. was inherited. Only you can build your character, however. Every move you make, every choice you make, puts a stone in place. Emerald City or cheap cut glass. Your call.

Successful leaders are the ones who combine the virtues of the Tin Man, the Scarecrow and the Cowardly Lion. They have a heart (compassion). They have brains (the intelligence to make the right choices). And they have courage, without which compassion and intellect become just points for classroom discussion.

Oh. About the Ruby Slippers.

Sorry. Strictly fiction. There is no magic that will make you a leader by tapping your heels together three times, no matter where you live. It takes character, compassion, courage and smarts, along with a distrust of the status quo and a sincere belief and commitment that you can make your own little part of the world a better place for everyone to live and work. Because, as that great philosopher

and leadership guru Dorothy so clearly puts it, “There’s no place like home.”

LEADERSHIP SECRETS OF THE CHESHIRE CAT

In the midst of a changing world of hardware and software, there will always be the live ware that makes it work, keeps it human, and gives leadership to those who use the technology.

Let me explain what I mean about leadership.

Do you remember Alice? Alice in Wonderland? She was not having a good day. And if you remember her story, you’ll remember that it was largely a problem of leadership in Wonderland. Lewis Carroll’s delightful tales of Alice and her adventures with strange animals, stranger people and animated decks of cards have been popular children’s stories for more than a century. They are, as we all know, far more than simple children’s stories. They are remarkable satire, a carefully crafted jest on life in Victorian England.

Anyway, as I was saying, Alice’s real problem in Wonderland was one of leadership, a situation we can all appreciate. Consider the sort of day she was having. First, she followed a white rabbit who was more interested in time management than real leadership. Following someone like that is always a danger. They are usually so worried about the appearance of things that they forget what it was they were trying to accomplish.

Alice followed the rabbit with his large pocket watch and ended up in a deep hole, which is usually the way that sort of thing works out. Then she met a caterpillar who may or may not have been on controlled substances and who suggested that she could solve her problems by trying a bit of the magic mushroom. It was the latest trendy thing to do. “Try it! Everyone else is.” Sort of like following the latest management theory or fad just because you don’t want to be left out of the fun.

So, she did and the next thing she knew, she was TOO BIG for her shoes and frightened everyone around her. Then she tried another trendy solution and suddenly she was TOO SMALL to accomplish much of anything. And when she turned to ask the caterpillar just what

the devil was going on, he, like any good consultant, had already left town.

It was all very confusing and things just got curiouser and curiouser, as Alice pointed out.

After that, she met a variety of people with solutions for everything, from mad hatters to a queen who issued the sentence first before hearing the evidence. Off with her head!

We know leaders like that, too.

The high point of the day came when she met the Cheshire Cat. (Most of us meet a Cheshire Cat sooner or later.) She found him perched in a tree at a crossroads-right about where you are standing today.

"Which road should I take?" she asked the cat.

"Where do you want to get to?" the cat asked helpfully.

"I don't know," admitted Alice.

"Then," advised the cat, "any road will take you there."

The leadership secrets of the Cheshire Cat? His message is one you should remember. If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't make any difference how you get there. If you don't have a plan, it doesn't matter what you do. If you don't have an objective, who cares if you ever reach it? If you don't take responsibility for your actions, who will? And perhaps the most important question of all: If you won't lead, then who will?

Incidentally, being a leader (looking for a better way) is no longer an option. Business as usual is not only unacceptable, it is suicidal. We must recognize that everything is changing; how we accomplish our goals, the people who will help us, the demands of the marketplace. To recognize these changes and turn them to your competitive advantage will require more than fundamental management skills. It will require real leaders.

Leaders have another distinctive characteristic. Leaders make decisions.

Jean Houston,
world-famous author, lecturer and consultant to world governments,

says, “history is a process of increasing decision-making responsibility on the part of the individual. Decisions are not made by races, cultures or nations unless first made by individuals.”

Leaders make decisions You, of course, can avoid decisions. To not decide is still a decision of sorts. The Cheshire Cat knew that. If you don’t know where you’re going, you don’t have to decide how to get there.

Alice couldn’t decide. She spent her day in Wonderland running around in circles, being chased by all sorts of strange individuals. And the irony of it all is this: It was all a dream. When she woke up, she was right back where she started, still trying to make a decision.

You are not like Alice. This is not a dream. You know where you are going. You know many of the roads that will take you there. You will be asked soon to make a decision. Our industry doesn’t need more managers. It needs leaders. If you would lead, you’ve come to the right place at the right time. You are needed.

And when you see the grinning Cheshire Cat watching you from a nearby tree (and you will someday), wave as you walk on by. As a leader, you already know where you are going.

E-mail and Body Language

One of the very first western movies I remember with any degree of accuracy is *The Virginian*, with Gary Cooper in the title role. It’s a classic, as is the 1906 novel by Owen Wister on which the movie is based.

If you saw it, perhaps you remember the scene early in the movie when a surly character calls the Virginian a “sonofabitch.”

Cooper turns and with a nasty steel edge to his voice says, “Smile when you call me that.” Or words to that effect. The point is obvious:

There are two ways to call someone an SOB. One means you are an SOB. The other, with the smile, means you’re a good ‘ole boy SOB and how ya been doin’, anyway?

Let's leave the classic cinema for a moment and cut to an e-mail I received recently.

The writer, a colleague, said some harsh things. I was surprised. Then I was disappointed. Then I was angry. And it was then that I sat down to my keyboard. I knew just how I was going to respond. I was going to tell him that his mother was best of breed and his sister dove for Roto-Rooter and his father starred in medical training films for the military and that he has the IQ of a salad bar. Then I was going to get mad.

Then he stuck his head in my office. We're located just a couple of doors apart, of course. I thought, "I'll nail him!" He professed innocence. Hadn't he written the original offending e-mail? Of course. But that wasn't what he meant. He meant something entirely different. And he said it with a smile.

Geez. All that terrific venom wasted.

This is not the first time this has happened. E-mail, I believe, is incredible. Here, on my desk, is an access to the most sophisticated communications system in the history of our species. And in our rush to use it, a couple of unexpected things are developing.

The first is what I call the Smile When You Call Me That Syndrome.

E-mail, by its very nature, removes all body language and voice tone. If you call me an SOB, I can tell which way you mean it by your voice and body language. I don't have that edge in e-mail. Words alone aren't enough, I think. They express the idea but not the context. They give the information but not the environment in which the information will be used. It isn't enough.

The end results are misunderstandings, sometimes of nearly violent proportions. I see it almost daily in my corporate e-mail and, most especially, in a couple of e-mail discussion lists in which I participate. Sometimes, it's like being e-mailed.

E-mail, then, demands that we use care in our words. An angry recipient doesn't help get your message across.

The second unexpected thing developing from our rush to e-mail is what we'll call The Naked Truth Factor.

Suddenly, business executives, for example, are handling their own correspondence. There is no secretary or administrative assistant reviewing the content, context, spelling, grammar and punctuation. And the results are positively embarrassing. It numbs the mind to realize how many senior executives can't spell or don't have a clue what it means to have the verb and the subject in agreement. ("What the hell! Let 'em negotiate!")

Interestingly enough, I detect a couple of trends here. Clearly, more and more of our business and personal communications will move via e-mail or its next generation equivalent. But, if you read the work of today's high school students, you have to fear for the language. They can barely communicate with themselves, much less anyone above the age of 20.

Now, the upside to all of this is that someone like me who writes for a living is never going to be out of work. The downside is that, sooner or later, the writers are all going to go to that great writers' block in the sky. And then where will the rest of you be?

But I digress.

E-mail and its various electronic sisters and brothers are incredible. I'm in regular touch now with family and friends I haven't written to in years. It's wonderful. Despite its almost magical communications abilities, however, e-mail is placing tougher demands on us. We must use more care when we communicate. We must weigh our words carefully. And because we are now hanging it all out for the world to see, we must demonstrate a certain level of skill and respect in the use of our language, whatever that language may be.

We have this remarkable communications tool. I wonder, however, if we are communicators enough to use it well and wisely.

And, hey, Gary! I'm smiling! I'm smiling!

Death by PowerPoint®

PowerPoint® is right up there on my list of the

World's Most Dangerous Electrically Powered Tools, a notch or so below the power saw and just above desktop publishing.

Any tool, when used properly, can benefit the user. Power saws and drills just beat their manual counterparts all to hell, although I think the jury is still out on power toothbrushes. It's when tools are used improperly, usually by well-intentioned amateurs, that they can wreak havoc.

Electronic communications, publishing and graphics programs put the most sophisticated communications tools in the history of the species in our hands. As a professional communicator who clearly remembers hot type and carbon paper, it's a joy to have them. However (and this is the scary part), those same tools are also in the hands of your church secretary and the entertainment chairman of the local Rotary club.

If you doubt the dangers here, take a good look at your next church bulletin or club newsletter. Three different column widths, eight different type fonts, six different type sizes and nine unrelated bits of artwork. And that's just on page one.

PowerPoint® has inflicted this chaos on the large presentation screen. When designed by professionals and used to underscore and reinforce, they can be a real gift to the speaker and the audience. When designed by the secretary in the marketing department or the kids in planning (White space! No! We need more numbers there!), it's the equivalent of that church bulletin but with an attitude.

One of the distinctive marks of a professional is restraint. Just because you have 200 fonts available doesn't mean you have to use all of them. A professional communicator understands that PowerPoint® graphics are called "speech support" for a reason. Use them with restraint.

Yes, that does imply that I think there are times when PowerPoint® graphics-intelligently used, of course-are appropriate. And when, you ask, would that be?

Wilma Mathews, a communicator and IABC colleague for whom I have great respect, recently reminded me that there are,

basically, two types of speakers: the Teacher and the Preacher.

For the Teacher, PowerPoint® is both appropriate and necessary. Of course, the Teacher is not the focus of the presentation. The information is the focus. The students (read “audience”) are primarily interested in gathering information. Graphics, whether as complex as PowerPoint® or as simple as a chalkboard, aid that process.

For the Preacher, however, it’s a different story. The Preacher is the focus of the presentation. And since you can’t read graphics and stuff on a big screen and still pay attention to the Preacher, you’ve got a problem.

I write frequently for Jim Evans, the CEO of Best Western. He’s a gifted speaker. And he works hard at it, which is most unusual in my experience. He wants to be a better speaker; he wants to stand in front of an audience and hold them in the palm of his hand; and he’s willing to rehearse long hours to accomplish that goal. Nice, huh?

Sometimes, he is a Teacher. Most often, however, he’s a Preacher. He brings a motivational message. He wants the troops to get excited, to buy into his vision. He’s after that “Wow!” factor when he speaks. We haven’t started taking up a collection or yelling “Amen!” at the end of his presentations but we’ve come close on a couple of occasions.

Does he need PowerPoint® graphics to make him a better speaker? A resounding “NO!” They detract from the dynamic speaker that he is. Not to mention detracting from the tastefully eloquent speeches that his writer prepares for him. To build complex graphics with bells and whistles and statistics and revolving logos and then run them up on the big screen behind him is an insult to his quality as a speaker. And it’s confusing to the audience.

So. Final answer. Are electronic slides ever appropriate? Sure, used in moderation and in cases where they enhance the understanding of the message.

There is one other appropriate situation. That would be when your speaker is weak, poorly organized, and totally lacking in charisma. By all means, get that PowerPoint® up there. Run cartoons.

Rent a movie. Anything to distract the audience from the natural disaster at the podium.

Understanding The Bull of Wall Street

The first rules of good writing I ever learned went something like this:

1. Always put the carbon paper in shiny side down.
2. Paper cuts are God's way of saying "pay attention."
3. The reason you are writing is to be understood.

Of course, a lot has changed in the 35 years or so since I learned those rules. The first rule, for example, is now obsolete. What concerns me today is that the last rule apparently became obsolete, too, and I didn't know it.

I'm not a big fan of change. Too often, I've found, it's just change, not progress, and has little to recommend it. I like the little rituals of my life, the things that don't change. On weekends, I like to get up reasonably early and read the morning paper. It's a small thing, but I've been doing it for years, and, accompanied by a cup of good coffee, it's a pleasant little ritual. If you think about your life, you'll find small rituals throughout: where you shop, your favorite restaurant, how you dress, where you go when you have free time, etc. It's especially true in our business life.

Life in a large corporation today is a ritual. It has its own language and vocabulary, its own prescribed dress, approved events, line officers and, of course, the need to preserve its own sense of mystery and selectivity.

The best place to observe corporate ritual is to catch it at work and play in its own habitat. That would be in its written form, either memos and letters or corporate newsletters and the like.

Consider the following paragraph. This is the real thing. This is the opening paragraph (what we real writers call "the lead") from a corporate newsletter article. No kidding. We can't make this stuff up. Our pride forbids it. (Actually, the Ragan Report, one

of our fine professional publications, spotted it first.)

“The need to fly in formation and achieve clarity of focus. Using extremely compelling systems thinking tools, the NQC is refining the six strategic outcomes so that they align with the strategic organizational review process. An NQC member will champion each outcome, with a key role being to strike cross-functional teams to clearly identify corporate and branch strategies to reach each outcome.”

Did you understand any of that? Me, neither, and there’s a good reason. I’m still paying attention to my third rule of good writing. I still see language as a means of conveying ideas, instead of what it has become for the new generation of corporate creatures. For them, words are trendy symbols, sort of like the prehistoric cave paintings in France. We know they must have meant something once, but, today, hey...who knows? Words are also passwords. If you understood that paragraph, you are an initiate of a highly esoteric, extremely complex corporate ritual. You are on the cutting edge of corporate technobabble. You, kid, are going places. If, on the other hand, you didn’t understand anything except the prepositions, it’s clear YOU were not meant to understand it. Information is power. What makes you think you deserve power?!

There is hope, however, in the bull of Wall Street. You can study. You must begin by learning the vocabulary and studying its proper use. If this seems too difficult, go find a 28-year-old with a tie and an attitude. He’ll tell you what it means, grandpa. Or you can use the cartoon strip Dilbert as a primer.

First, always use “dialogue” rather than just talking to people. Better yet, throw in appropriate techno-references. “Let’s have your input.” “Are you booted up to speed?” Never use the word “creative.” To define the concept, always use something like “thinking outside the box,” or “pushing the envelope.” “Functionality,” “deliverables” (as a noun), and “paradigms” are all great words. And if you reach the point when someone says “model” and you automatically think of “paradigm” rather than that foxy chick in the red swimsuit on Baywatch, you’re about ready.

Likewise, “touching base” is good. So is any direct or oblique reference to mission statements, strategic plans, tactical

plans, objectives, the need for lengthy and expensive studies, consultants, focus groups and almost any word ending in “ize.” (Prioritize, maximize, upyourize, etc.)

Misdirection, obfuscation and the covering of one’s tush seem to be the principal tenets of this modern corporate ritual. There was a time when I hoped this might change, that we might opt for greater understanding through the medium of language. In other words, I thought we might learn as we got older.

I was wrong.

Dumb at the beginning, dumb at the end. Some things, apparently, don’t ever change.

Take The A-Team

Everything I need to know about corporate life and strategic planning, sort of, I learned from Col. Hannibal Smith and television reruns of the A-Team.

I know. You find that hard to believe, perhaps holding out for the moral and business lessons of the Brady Bunch, Leave it to Beaver or Charlie’s Angels. While each of these television series had certain merits, they are but sand before the wind of the A-Team’s moral and philosophical assault.

Remember The A-Team? It was an action/adventure/comedy series that ran on NBC from 1983 to 1987. Today, the TV gods are good and it runs occasionally on a station that programs vintage shows. I firmly believe it belongs on Public Broadcasting or some other educational outlet, but there you have it.

The plot was simple. A team of crack commandos was convicted during the final days of the war in Viet Nam of a crime they didn’t commit. They escaped and went underground. “Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as soldiers of fortune. If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire The A-Team.” That’s from the opening setup of each show. Now you know the plot. Sorry you missed the theme music.

The A-Team was lead by Col. John “Hannibal” Smith (George Peppard, when he was off-screen). I like Peppard and I was very sorry when he died in 1994 at the age of 66. He was too cool for words.

You can learn a lot from a guy like that.

But I digress.

Consider some the lessons taught by The A-Team:

- Diversity is cool. The team consisted of Hannibal, one African-American (Mr. T), one token woman, one certifiably crazy man (Howling Mad Murdock) and a scam artist (Face Man). That's pretty diverse and is just about the make-up of most departments in many major corporations.
- Planning is important. A-Team plans seldom work as Col. Smith intended, but they do work somehow. What's important, as Hannibal points out, is that the plan comes together. Corporate planning is like that, too. We spend hours planning, we do something, the plan doesn't work right, then we scramble to make it look like that's what we were planning all along. I love it when a plan comes together.
- Violence is a tool to teach others. In all 98-hours of A-Team shows, only one man ever gets killed. Hundreds of trucks are blown up. Hundreds of cars are blown up. Jeeps beyond number are blown up. Bombs go off. Machine guns go off. Water guns go off. No one gets killed. And the only time people really get hurt is when it's necessary to further the plot (we shoot B.A. (Mr. T) because the rest of the script calls for a hospital). By using violence as a teaching tool, The A-Team demonstrates that it is possible to achieve your objective without stacking up a big body count. The lesson here is simple: Bodies are hard to hide or dispose of. Blow up their car instead of killing them. Maybe they'll get the message and quit, leaving you with no body to hide and scrap metal that has certain financial value.
- Gloves are good. Hannibal always wears black leather gloves. He keeps his hands clean. There is a strong corporate message here, too.
- Crazy is good. Howling Mad Murdock is supposed to be crazy. He's the team's pilot and general source of amusement. He's crazy as a fox. Bad guys frequently ignore him because he's crazy. There is a corporate lesson in this, too, if I can just get the little voices in my head to stop long enough so I can figure it out.
- Do good work. They can't keep you down forever. The A-Team was immensely popular in the middle 1980s. Now they are back. There are even plans for a movie or a new series. It's not always like that in corporate life, but one can hope, you know? Of course, you must remember it's only a television show. I mean, The A-Team always had cool clothes, a cool ride, cool toys, cool friends and hung out in cool places. You must understand that life is not really like this. You will probably have to settle for just one or two of these cool things and hope the rest will come later. And remember: If all else fails, The A-Team can help you.

Everything I Need To Know About Life (Almost) I Learned In Ninth Grade Shop

My wife teaches high school English. That statement opens up a wide range of opportunities for discussion, of course. Let me limit it to where I was headed when I wrote it. Because she teaches high school, we frequently discuss the curriculum. Between us, we have constructed what is clearly the perfect high school class schedule and, sadly, the Board of Education is simply too dense to appreciate it. Which is, of course, another issue for discussion at another time.

But I digress.

My point is that while we debate what should be taught, we forget the most important classes. Remember all the hoopla about teaching sex education? Why bother? Thanks to national politics, the local newspaper and the evening news have pretty well offered a graduate course lately. And who says television ain't educational!?

The real crime is that most schools don't require shop class any more. This, for me, ranks right up there with driver's training, which most schools don't offer anymore, either. God forbid we should teach anything that might have practical and immediate application to real life, you know?

But back to shop class. I mean, almost everything I need to know about life, I learned in ninth grade shop class with Mr. Jones. For example, a lamp in our living room ceased functioning recently. A new bulb did not improve the situation. My wife suggested we throw the offending lamp out and buy a new one. Cost: approximately \$70. I, however, purchased a new socket (cost approximately \$2) and proceeded to replace the old socket. I learned how to do this in ninth grade shop class. I even remembered to unplug the lamp when connecting the new socket. No dim bulbs here! I learned how to do a t-splice, a pigtail splice, an Underwriter's® splice and how to make a spice rack for Mom out of sheet metal. I still remember the look of wonder on her face when I presented it to her. At least, I assume that is what the look was.

I learned how to use tools. Power tools. Band saws and drill presses and the like. It was very cool. Today, I'm told, some colleges offer Safety With Power Tools as a course for student athletes. This may be true, I don't know. They can't beat Mr. Jones,

however, when it comes to power tools. He had no discipline problems in his classes. This was because he showed us, up close, what a power drill could do to wood. Just imagine, he said, what it would do to your head. After that, he figured, students would know he was serious and viola! no discipline problems. He was, of course, ahead of his time.

But I digress again.

We learned about wood and how to make things from it. Some of the more talented made chests and stereo cabinets and such. The rest of us settled for something slightly less challenging. I think I made a shelf. You know, the kind you can fasten to a wall and put coffee cups or whatever on? Again, Mom was awe-struck.

We learned about paint and brushes. And how to clean up after painting. Mr. Jones was hell on clean.

Today, I have a small shop in my garage. I do some scale modeling of ships in wood and occasionally tinker with a variety of small projects. Every time I sit down at my workbench (which I built myself), I use something that Mr. Jones taught me in ninth grade shop class. My memories of geometry, biology, Latin and a variety of other classes are more than just a little dim. But that shop class! Life would be very unfulfilled without that class.

Anyway, I'm worried now. There is an entire generation of students who don't have a clue about how to wire a socket or do a classic pigtail splice. And, for the life of me, I just don't see how they're going to make it through life, you know?

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